

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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A STERN CHASE.

A STORY IN THREE PARTS.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY.

THE FIRST PART.

CHAPTER VI. "EL TREMBLOR."

HUGH ROSSLYN found himself on his feet, by no voluntary movement; and, after the pause of an instant to steady himself, he looked eagerly around. The horrible heave of the floor had ceased almost as soon as it was felt, but the movement, the sudden banging of some doors at the back of the theatre, and the swaying and flickering of the lights, had alarmed the audience even before Pepito's cry, and, in a moment, the place was given over to panic. The occasion for using the facilities for egress had come, but the people in their fear seemed to forget them, while they endangered themselves by their unrestrained terror. A general rush was made from the pit, the boxes, the gallery, by masses of bewildered people, forgetful of everything else under the overmastering impulse of self-preservation. The women in the boxes strove frantically to get out into the lobbies, which they could have done with ease and safety, had they had self-restraint enough to put any order into their efforts. But they were too much terrified; a helpless flock of sheep could not have had less presence of mind. Not one among the crowd tried to arrest the panic, or cried out that the earth had ceased to quake. It was a scene of indescribable confusion, while the shrieks of women pushed or knocked off their feet by those striving to press past them, who were stronger than they, were terrible. The men in the pit rushed out, and were blocked up in the space between it and the boxes; some of the quickest and

most fortunate getting through the door which opened upon the stage—whence the actors had fled precipitately—and into the street, there to encounter a crowd also in wild alarm. The regular entrances were, of course, blocked up in a minute. The officials of the theatre had profited by their proximity to the doors to fly at once.

With a glance Hugh Rosslyn had seen all this: so distinctly indeed, notwithstanding the confusion, that certain groups and features of the scene returned to his memory afterwards with as much accuracy as though it were one he had observed at leisure. In a moment his eye fell on Ines; the next he was forcing his way towards her.

The position of Don Saturnino's box, although excellent for view, was less favourable for egress; the door in the lobby at the back of it was at a considerable distance, and opposite that of a box much beyond his in the tier. For this door there was an overwhelming rush, and as Hugh caught sight of Ines, and saw that she was clutching the rail in front of her, Don Saturnino, holding his wife before him with one arm, and pushing his way out with the other, was divided from his daughter by a solid wedge of terrified men and women.

Ines, seemingly paralysed with fear, made no attempt to move. She clung to the rail, and was flung forward over it by the rush of people, which had in those few seconds almost cleared the space intervening between the pit and the boxes at that particular spot.

"Ines, Ines," cried Hugh, as he reached the rail, "don't look so terrified; it is over. I am here. Stand up on your footstool."

The little cane stool was fortunately

close to the rail. She did as he told her, and thus raised herself into a position in which he could get hold of her. He lifted her with his strong arms over the rail, and she was safe from the crowd, if not from the earthquake. His quick eye had descried one empty space in the tumultuous scene. It was the Governor-General's box, which had a private lobby and door, and had been instantly evacuated by his Excellency and his staff. Carrying Ines in one arm, for her trembling told him she could not stand, Hugh made his way to this haven of refuge, lifted Ines over the rail, and in another moment stood by her side in the box.

These incidents had occurred with extraordinary rapidity. When Hugh drew breath, and again looked around him, the tumult in the theatre was already subsiding, only to be replaced by the tumult in the street outside, into which the audience were thronging, and spreading the news that several persons were probably killed, and a large number certainly injured. But the injured were as yet unheeded: the horrid search for the missing would begin with the first abatement of the confusion; for the moment the abject terror, that only earthquake inspires, was lord of all.

Hugh placed Ines in a chair and tried to soothe her. The glance which she directed to the walls and the roof, and the shudder which ran through her frame as she caught his coat-sleeve tightly in her hand and hid her face against his arm, without uttering a sound, told him plainly enough that she dreaded a second shock. It was extremely dangerous to remain where they were; but how should he convey her through that dreadful crowd outside? He hardly knew whether he was suffering from the earthquake-horror, or merely from excitement, but he was conscious of a sick, faint feeling which warned him not to try his own strength too far. For a few minutes, at all events, he would keep her where they were.

"It will not come again," he said; "I am sure it will not. Everything is steady and quiet, except the people. Are you better? Are you hurt in any way? I thought you would have fallen and been trampled on, before I could reach you. Pray try to tell me—are you hurt?"

"No, no; I am not hurt. And you have saved my life!"

She kept her face still hidden on his arm, and she was still shuddering.

"Not quite that. I don't think your life was in any danger. I am thankful you are not hurt. Are you a little stronger? You are not so frightened now?"

He looked down on her lustrous black hair; the bright flowers had fallen from it, and the loosened tresses hung upon her neck, and fell forward like a veil about her hidden face.

She raised her head, and, loosing her hold on his sleeve, put her hands up to her hair. The comb had fallen out, and she rapidly twisted up the long locks into a knot at the back of her neck.

"Can we get out now?" she asked, still trembling. "Indeed, we must not stay. You do not know what the 'tremblor' is. In another minute the walls may crack, and the roof fall on us."

They were almost alone in the great space by this time; the frightened crowd had nearly all got out somehow.

"Yes, we will go; this door must lead direct to some exit."

He took her firmly by the hand, and led her into the lobby; but they had taken only a few steps when once more the tinkling sound which had already arrested Hugh's attention, caught his ear. It came from the shade over a light in the lobby, and it was sufficient warning for Hugh.

"Run—run!" he cried, and drew her along the passage; but it was too late. The sickening heave was felt again; the lights flickered, and a tearing sound on the other side of the theatre indicated that the second shock was not so harmless as the first. Hugh made a fruitless effort to move on; he staggered, half-blind and dizzy, against the outer wall of the lobby; and had hardly strength enough to clasp to his breast the insensible form of Ines.

When Don Saturnino de Rodas made his way out of the theatre, he had no idea that Ines was left behind. His first impulse had been to secure his wife's safety, and he had instantly begun to force his way out with her, crying to his nephew: "Norberto, see to Ines!" But Norberto was not there. He had quitted his seat only a minute before, unseen by Don Saturnino—who was absorbed in the acting of the Star—and was making an appointment with a friend, to meet after the play, when the alarm was given. He was in a favourable position, and was the last man

in the world to forfeit it. No blame can possibly attach to anyone for being frightened by an earthquake, even though it be on a small scale; but of all that bewildered crowd, not one was more thoroughly frightened than Norberto de Rodas. He fled with the utmost precipitation, and without bestowing a thought upon Ines; wholly bent on gaining an open space. He only partially succeeded. The street was indeed safely reached, but he was caught in a rush of people escaping from a neighbouring restaurant; lost his footing; got an ugly fall; and was picked up, severely bruised, and with a broken arm.

Don Saturnino and his wife reached their house in safety, to find the whole of their household in the open street, and in the greatest alarm—a sensation always exhibited with a grotesque candour by coloured people. If anyone present had been qualified to contemplate the scene “with the disinterested composure of an immortal being,” that hypothetical spectator must have been amused by the rolling eyes, the extraordinary contortions, and the oddly-mixed prayers, in which the orthodox invocation of the Deity and the saints was combined with deprecatory interjections, which betrayed the ineradicable influence of witchcraft over the minds of the servants who crowded round their master and mistress, and seemed to recover a little courage from the sight of them.

Doña Mercedes was very pale. Her dress was torn in several places, the rich lace hanging in strips. She looked around her wildly for a moment; then sprang forward, and snatched her little son from the arms of one of the servants with a cry of relief. The child had been roused from his sleep, and was dressed in a white cotton nightgown only. He was frightened, not by the tremblor, but by the unusual state of things, and sobbing piteously.

“Oh, my darling, my darling, thanks be to God and the Santisima, you are safe!”

She covered the boy's face with kisses, and seated herself on the ground with him, wrapping the folds of her satin skirt round his meagre and chilly form. An old woman approached Don Saturnino, and said:

“Señor, is not the señorita with you? I do not see her.”

It was Teresita. At this moment—and as Don Saturnino, startled by Teresita's

question, looked round for his daughter—the two attendants, who had accompanied the ladies to the theatre, made their appearance, also in a state of terror which rendered them hardly able to answer his questions respecting their young mistress. They could tell him nothing. Like their betters, they had thought only of their own safety.

“Ines is not here,” said Don Saturnino to his wife; “I must return to the theatre.”

“Not here!” Doña Mercedes had not thought about the girl. The round black eyes of Teresita were fixed on her, as she rose from the ground with the aid of her husband's hand, hugging the child, now warmed and comforted, to her breast. “Not here! But Norberto is with her; she must be safe. She will be here presently. Pray don't leave me. You must not leave me, with only these frightened people. And it may come again; the third shock may be worse still. You must not go.”

“I must go, mi Mercedita. Who knows what may have happened to Ines? I think it is over. It is much cooler.” He held his hand up and moved the fingers, feeling the slight stir of a pleasant air. “If you will not go into the house, you can at least stand in the doorway—see, they are all doing that—until I return.”

She tried to catch his arm and hold him; but Don Saturnino turned resolutely away. In the attempt she let go the folds of her yellow satin skirt, which she had wrapped round the child. Teresita took off her own gaudy shawl, threw it over the little fellow, and instantly followed her master, with a muttered curse addressed to his handsome wife, and singularly at variance with the spontaneous act of kindness she had just done.

The night was almost as light as day, and the streets were thronged with people, but the tumult was beginning to subside in those parts of the city to which the news of the panic in the theatre had not yet penetrated. Don Saturnino hurried on, followed by Teresita, and on nearing the Teatro Real, perceived that it was now surrounded by a guard, composed partly of police, and partly of firemen, who were keeping back the crowd. Some of the persons employed in the theatre had returned to it, and were searching for any persons who might have received injuries which prevented their escape. An authoritative statement that the only damage the building had sustained was a crack

in the outer wall, close to the principal doorway, and some breakages of glass, had satisfactorily disposed of the rumour which had spread rapidly in the neighbourhood, to the effect that the roof had fallen in, and laid the "sala" in ruins.

Don Saturnino de Rodas was not the only person who had come in fear and anxiety to discover whether one dear to him was among the injured in the interior of the building; but he was the best known and most important. The orders just issued that no one was to be admitted to the theatre, or allowed to pass the line of the guard, were too stringent and too necessary to be abrogated in favour of any individual; but Don Saturnino caught sight of his family doctor beyond the cordon, and called out:

"Stay a moment, Don Francisco, and let me speak to you."

The doctor turned back at once and came to Don Saturnino.

"What is it, my good friend?" he said. "No one belonging to you is hurt, I hope?"

"I hope not; but my daughter has not reached home. I left the theatre with my wife, believing that she and my nephew were close behind us, and I have come back to look for them."

"Were you in your usual box?"

"Yes."

"I will hurry on and look for the Señora Ines at once. But I hope I shall not find her, and that she has only returned home by some other way and missed you. Remain here, and I will come back to you at once."

The doctor entered the building, and Don Saturnino walked restlessly up and down before the black faces of the firemen, who were the only human beings in the town who did not seem to be affected by the earthquake panic.

While Don Saturnino walked up and down in great suspense, the old negress knelt patiently on the ground, and told her big yellow beads.

In a very short time the doctor came back, accompanied by one of the officials of the theatre and a superior officer of police. The latter authoritatively broke the cordon, and admitted Don Saturnino into the space beyond, while Don Francisco gave him the welcome news that his daughter was in the building and unhurt.

"Did I not see Teresita?" he added.

"Yes; she is there."

"That is well. She may come in?" he

asked the official; "she is the señorita's attendant."

Leave was given, and the old woman followed her master, rejoicing. Don Saturnino, much bewildered—for why, if Ines was not hurt, had she and Norberto stayed in the theatre when everybody fled?—found his daughter seated in a front stall-chair, looking very pale and nervous; and when he had kissed her and expressed his relief, he observed with astonishment that her companion was not his nephew Norberto, but the young Englishman, Rodney's friend. Don Francisco had bustled off immediately with a reassuring nod and smile to Ines, to look for any casualties that might require his attention, and to take good news to other enquirers, for no one had been seriously hurt. Teresita had dropped on her knees before her "niña," and was kissing her hands, fondling her, crying and praying over her in a way that touched Hugh deeply, and Ines had to respond to her emotional affection before she could reply to her father's question:

"Where is Norberto?"

"I do not know; I never saw him. Father, it was this gentleman who saved my life."

Gently pushing Teresita from before her, she rose from her seat, leaned upon her father's arm, and pointing to the opposite side of the house, she told how Hugh had rescued her, had carried her to the stage-box, and was taking her to the door when the second shock of the "tremblor" came, and she fainted.

Don Saturnino interrupted her with ejaculatory expressions of gratitude to Hugh, and admiration of his presence of mind; which Hugh received with the incurable awkwardness of an Englishman. The best way to cut them short was to take up the tale at the point at which Ines dropped it.

"It was nothing, I assure you, sir," he said. "I ought not to have lost a moment in getting out of the house, but there was such a tumult outside that I feared your daughter would have to encounter as much risk there as here. The second shock overpowered her, and as I had no means of reviving her, I could only wait until the faintness passed off, and then take her as near to the entrance as I could. I was afraid to leave her alone, or I should have gone to look for assistance. She had just said that she felt strong enough to walk when the doctor, Don Francisco, came in, and told

her you were outside. Do you not think," added Hugh with a practical air, "we had better take her home as soon as possible?"

While he was speaking, Teresita had been busily putting Ines's crushed dress and disarranged hair to rights, and, now that the agitation of the occasion had to some extent subsided, she loudly lamented the loss of the pearl-mounted comb which she had placed with such pride in her darling's beautiful braids. Nay, more—she hinted that a "tremblor" was not an unfavourable opportunity for people who coveted their neighbours' goods to annex them, and that it was very easy to pull out a comb in a crowd.

Numbers of people were still in the street when Don Saturnino came out of the theatre, supporting his daughter on his arm, and accompanied by Hugh Rosslyn; but the popular excitement had subsided when it became known that the missing persons had all been satisfactorily accounted for.

Don Francisco came running out from the remoter regions of the house to say to Ines that he would call the next day to see how she was. Hearing Don Saturnino again remark to Hugh that it was very odd about his nephew, for he distinctly remembered having said to him, as he was making his way out with his wife, "See to Ines," the doctor said to him:

"You are speaking of Don Norberto. I am sorry to tell you that he has been more severely hurt than anyone here to-night; but it was in the crowd outside not inside the theatre that it happened. I was prevented from getting here as soon as I ought by having to set his right arm."

Don Saturnino heard this with concern. Nevertheless, he was displeased with his nephew. It was clear that Norberto had got safely out of the theatre. Had he purposely left Ines? Was he a coward? The unpleasant suspicion lowered Norberto considerably in his uncle's favour; and the young man would have been enraged, if he could have known how fine a contrast to himself the young Englishman, towards whom he had conceived so deep and deadly a dislike, presented in the eyes of both Don Saturnino and his daughter.

Ines heard of the accident to her cousin with guilty joy. She had for some time regarded him with a sentiment as nearly approaching to hatred as her girlish and innocent mind could entertain, and the events of the last two days had intensified

it. To know that for a while at least she should not be obliged either to see him or to invent excuses for avoiding him; that she should be free from the sense that her looks were watched and her words listened to by this man, who asserted in every look and word of his own a power and a right against which she revolted with her whole heart and soul, but which she was powerless to resist; was happiness. No; it would have been happiness before the last two days had changed her life and herself; it was priceless now.

She made no remark on Don Saturnino's expressions of concern; she kept silence, but that silence was eloquent for the lover who walked by her side under the splendid tropical sky in its glory of the night, and who blessed in his soul the horrid convulsion of Nature which had swept away for them the conventional barriers of time and formality.

A year ago, or only yesterday, what did it matter to him or to her? He had held her in his arms, close to his heart. Her eyes had met his in their first look of awakening consciousness; and she knew that he loved her, and that she loved him. What did it matter that they were almost strangers, as the world counts such things? Nothing. What had they to do with the world? Hugh's pulses were bounding with hope. The excitement of the events of the night was upon him still; his voice vibrated, his eyes sparkled; he looked like a demi-god to the girl, who believed that she owed her life to his cool presence of mind, and who had "found her fair soul" under the spell of his presence. He had earned her father's gratitude, and received the strongest assurances of it. The vague vision of the early portion of the evening had become the strongest purpose of Hugh Rosslyn's soul.

Teresita had followed Don Saturnino, Ines, and Hugh, and she was at no loss to interpret the feelings of the Señor Inglés. He had saved her treasure, her niña, the apple of her eye, when her father and her cousin had deserted her; and he loved her. Now, if he could save her from both Norberto and the convent, what a splendid hero he would be in poor Teresita's eyes! The old woman, whose ignorant mind was illumined solely by the light of love, saw what Ines's father did not perceive; and, as she hated, with all the strength of her heart, Doña Mercedes and Norberto, she would have still more highly esteemed Hugh if she could have hoped

that he would contrive to kill them both.

At the door of Don Saturnino's house, Hugh took his leave of Ines and her father. The air had restored her; she was calm and steady now. Don Saturnino bade him adieu with a heartfelt repetition of his thanks. Ines timidly gave him her hand, and as he bent low to kiss it, he whispered, so that only she could hear, one word. It was the proverbial:

"Mañana!"

Doña Mercedes greeted the safe return of Ines with propriety. There was no emotion and little warmth in her manner, and Ines knew, as well as Doña Mercedes herself, that, if her mangled body had been found in the theatre, her father's wife would have treated that event with the same propriety and indifference. But Ines did not care. The secret she had read, when her eyes opened to meet the gaze of Hugh's, reduced all other things to insignificance.

The household had been restored to comparative quiet, and hasty arrangements made for sleeping out of doors, in the courtyard. The very simple sleeping-apparatus in use in the country rendered this an easy matter.

It was very late by the time Hugh got back to the Camp, where he found Rodney awaiting him with anxiety which he endeavoured to conceal under his ordinary light and careless manner.

"So here you are, all safe after your very last experience of 'cosas de Cuba.' Glad to see you, my dear fellow. Our talk was prophetic, wasn't it? What do you think of the rumble and the quiver now?"

Hugh pulled the cane lounge into a convenient position, stretched himself upon it, and lighted a cigarito before he answered:

"I think the rumble is charming, and the quiver delicious. 'Viva el tremblor!'"

STUDIES OF OVER THE WAY.

CRABBE STREET, ISLINGTON.

IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

My sojourn in the street above-named was a short one; but I have, nevertheless, a long story to tell concerning it. I had been suffering from indigestion, and, having told my ailment to Dr. Clausius, I was advised by him to go and live on higher ground. "In Chermanny, ven I had my schdomag schpoilt I allways did go up

to ze mountains, ant I allways cot gured," he informed me. Pentonville Hill is not exactly a mountain, but it was the highest elevation I could find within easy distance of the British Museum, so I went up one morning and hired some rooms in Crabbe Street, Islington. I found the counsels of Dr. Clausius in the matter of the science of health as fallacious as his philosophical deductions, for my indigestion grew worse than ever. My landlady certainly cooked abominably, but I do not think this fact can have been the origin of the evil, for no landlady, who ever "did for me," has cooked otherwise.

I took possession of my rooms on the 25th of March, and in a very short time was made aware that I had an "over the way" in the shape of a young bank-clerk, who left his house every morning at twenty-five minutes past eight. I never saw a more regular, nor, I will add, a more uninteresting, young man. I saw Simpson several times before I thought it worth while to allude to the existence of such a commonplace "over the way"; but, at last, the regularity of the bank-clerk's goings and comings was interrupted. For a week he never appeared at all. Then the doctor began to call, first once, then twice a day. Then the street was littered with straw, and I felt that I was justified in inferring that the bank-clerk was not so well as he might be.

At last the doctor's visits became less frequent; the straw wore itself into London mud of the finest quality, and as such was carted away; and one morning, about a month after his disappearance, the bank-clerk reappeared, wan and tottering, and shambled down the street towards the omnibus corner, trying to look as if nothing were the matter with him. This went on for a week. He was evidently not yet back to the collar, for he went out and in at all sorts of irregular hours; but one morning, to my amazement, I saw him, dressed in a light tweed suit, drive away in a hansom-cab. He was gone for a month or so, and then he came back looking well and strong.

The young man's illness, and the consequent irregularity in his movements, aroused in me an interest concerning him, which induced me to stay on at Crabbe Street for one quarter beyond the year for which I had originally taken the rooms. After his return, indeed, he settled down to his old clockwork habits; but I now felt that there was some possibility of an

adventure. But nothing happened till the May following, when he again set forth in tourist attire, and again was absent about a month; but this time he did not seem to have got much benefit from his holiday. He went out looking well—for a bank-clerk—and came back looking years older, with an air of strange preoccupation hanging round him. Every day he grew more haggard and wan. His bedroom-window was in the front, and I noted that he never went to bed till morning. His face became like the face of a man who had seen a ghost; but still he went regularly to his work, till the middle of July. Then he was absent for a couple of nights, from Saturday till Monday, and, three days after this, he disappeared for more than a week.

Now it certainly disturbed my confidence in the London banking system to find that bank-clerks were allowed to come and go in this indiscriminate fashion, and I had almost determined to remove my account to some house at Hamburg or Amsterdam, when one afternoon Simpson came in; and, seeing that something was troubling me, said with his quiet smile:

"You have been thinking about that young man who lives opposite. If you have an hour to spare I will tell you all about him—at least, I will tell you the story he told me about himself one day last week on board the Harwich steamer. It was a fine night, and we sat on deck till late, and I never listened to a stranger story in all my life."

Before I begin to tell you this story about a strange dream I had some time ago, I wish to inform you that I am an utter disbeliever in ghosts who walk about in white, or make their presence known by table-rapping or any such-like tomfoolery. With regard to dreams, whenever I have heard of any remarkable fulfilment, I have always declined to admit any element of cause and effect, and have referred any striking correspondence between the dream and what followed to coincidence alone. I am just as sceptical as ever, but when you have heard the whole of my story, I think you will allow that my beliefs, or non-beliefs, have sustained a fairly rigorous ordeal. In the month of May, last year, I was recovering from a rather sharp attack of fever. I am a clerk in one of the great London banks, and my employers, all through the time of my sickness and convalescence, treated me with the greatest

kindness and generosity. The managing-clerk called to see me often, and whenever he came he urged me to give myself full time to get strong before returning to my work. I felt very grateful to him, but I doubt whether I should have taken full advantage of his kindness had it not been for an unlooked-for event. I was indeed getting rather tired of doing nothing in London, for I am by no means a Londoner after the type of Charles Lamb's Superannuated Man. London to me is a place to work in, and nothing else. I had had very little experience of it as a place of leisure, for I am country bred, and always spend every available hour of my holidays in the country air. I was beginning to find the days drag along very heavily. I had made up my mind to go back to my desk on the following Monday, though I was still very weak, when the post brought me a letter from a distant relation, a Mr. Gregory Cross, an old gentleman I had never seen since I was a boy. Mr. Cross had heard of my illness, and he now wrote suggesting that I should try a course of country air and diet during my convalescence. I did not hesitate long. Mr. Cross had been good enough to say that I might follow my letter or telegram as soon as I liked. My room would be ready, and, late or early, he would be glad to welcome me.

Mr. Cross lived in Suffolk, and this was my first visit to that interesting and somewhat quiet county. Suffolk undoubtedly is quiet; its adversaries say that it is sleepy, or even silly. But this last epithet I reject as libellous. I journeyed as far as Ipswich speedily enough; but then I discovered that the local train, into which I was transferred, was infected with the county drowsiness, for it was half an hour behind time when it reached the station at which I was to descend. A porter, who had apparently just risen from a nap on a heap of corn-sacks, came forward, and silently held out his hand for my ticket; and the station-master, who was watering the cabbages in his garden, nodded a sleepy greeting to the engine-driver.

From the general aspect of the place, I fancied that the originator of the tradition as to Suffolk sleepiness must have made his observations at Clayfield—for that was the name of the village. It was indeed a land "in which it seemed always afternoon," and if I had found the lotos growing by the wayside, and the children

plucking them instead of dog-roses, I should not have been much astonished.

The station was a good mile distant from the little town, which lay nestled in a mass of dense elm-foliage; the church-tower, peering out above the trees, being the only index that any dwellings of men were near. The omnibus from The Crown took charge of me and my portmanteau, and deposited us at a little green door in a high brick wall. Out of this door issued a stout old gentleman, dressed in a swallow-tailed coat, shepherd's-plaid trousers, and a broad-brimmed straw hat.

I had quite forgotten what my cousin Gregory might be like, but I made sure this must be he, and no one else, and so it turned out.

After a cordial greeting, he led me out of the dusty glare of the street into a veritable little paradise of a garden, cut off from the outer world by a lofty wall, thickly covered with silvery lichens, with here and there a spot where the rich, dark-red surface of the old brickwork was as yet left exposed.

As I passed along, and marked the perfectly-kept garden-walks; the strips of lawn, softer than the softest carpet; the dainty little flower-beds full of the choicest flowers; and above all, the delightful old red-brick house, covered with creepers, now bursting into flower; I thought it would not be an unmixed evil if my convalescence should prove to be a lengthened one.

The house was a rambling, irregular old place, long and low, with a high-pitched roof, and chimneys so tortuous and complicated that I used to wonder how the smoke could find its way through them. Scarcely two of its rooms were on the same level. My cousin had been a great traveller in his day, and every room and passage contained some of the spoil he had gathered from German and Italian curiosity-shops; but he had arranged the best things in his collection in a long gallery facing south and running the whole length of the house. This gallery soon became my favourite haunt; but I think I was attracted there by the warmth and brightness rather than by the works of art with which my cousin had adorned it. The fragments of statuary, the mouldy lamps and vessels, and the ragged Florentine embroidery, in no way moved my admiration. The pictures, too, were a strangely mixed lot. Some of them were, to my taste, hideous examples of the early Siennese

school; and, side-by-side with these, you might find copies of the most popular works of Raphael and Carlo Dolce. I cannot say which I liked the least, anyhow I looked at them, new as well as old, as little as possible.

It was my cousin's custom to spend some hours every morning over his books, and, as I refused to allow him to alter his daily habits in the smallest degree on account of my presence, I used to repair at these times with a book and a pipe to the long gallery. At the extreme end there was a lovely oriel-window, projecting some distance into the garden. It was filled with old Flemish stained-glass, through which, even on the brightest day, the light fell mellow and subdued. There was a comfortable sofa by the opposite wall, and this sofa became my resting-place. I soon discovered that the picture hanging beside the oriel window differed entirely in character from the rest of my cousin's collection. It seemed to be an original; but I knew too little about art to say whether it was a work of any merit or not. The outlines were half obliterated, and the colour had almost disappeared under the combined ravages of time and smoke. There was little else to be seen on the canvas, except the white face of a woman peering out of the mass of gloomy margin. It was not a beautiful face. The eyes were large and the lower features rather coarse; but it wore a tender, kindly smile—a smile which before long began to have an irresistible attraction for me. Whenever I went to sit in the gallery, I always settled myself in a position which enabled me to glance up at the picture as often as I might lift my eyes from my book. I had been out one day with my cousin for a long excursion, and as soon as I returned I made straight for my resting-place. I was very tired, for our walk had been a severe one, and I sank wearily into my seat, with my eyes fixed upon the face of the woman, looking out of the darkened canvas with its strange, magnetic gaze. I do not know how long I remained awake, or how long I slept. I only know that when I regained consciousness my strange dream was over and done.

In my dream I was still in the long gallery. The statues were still in their places, and the pictures, with one exception, were hanging on the walls; and this exception was the picture I have been describing. The frame was in its place; but the face

of the lady had disappeared. The gallery was no longer empty; it was full of living, waking human forms—of that sort which one sees only in dreams. They were strange-looking men, who glanced at me with looks full of fear and suspicion as I passed them by. I walked the whole length of the room to my favourite seat, and there, sitting on my sofa, was the figure of a woman—the only woman I had as yet seen in this strange, sad, aged crowd. She was sitting with her back to me, and the light, streaming in through the stained-glass window, threw a bright crimson streak across her shoulders and neck, which were bare and dazzlingly white. She seemed to be aware of my presence before she saw me, for she rose with a friendly gesture as I approached, and, when I looked at her face, I saw at once that it was the face of my portrait. The kindly, winning smile was still floating over the lips, and the eyes were soft and full of life. She was dressed in a fashion which was strange to me. It looked as if it might be the national costume of some land, over which Parisian millinery had not yet spread its levelling blight. On her head she wore a bow of wide, black silk ribbon, and through her magnificent tresses, wound in a thick coil at the back of her head, was thrust a silver pin in the form of a dagger. As I drew near, I could see that the fashion of this dagger was quaint and somewhat gruesome. The handle and hilt were formed by the body and outstretched arms of a skeleton, which held in each of its bony hands a delicately-wrought flower, and bore on its head a troubadour's cap richly set with rubies. I sat down beside her with the feeling that I was in the presence of an old friend, and at once began to talk with her about the strange-looking people around us. A look of distress came into her eyes as I asked her the meaning of this assemblage, and why these men walked with such stealthy, noiseless footfall, looking about them so suspiciously, as if they expected to meet a foe at every turn. She sat for a moment silent, and I had to repeat my question before she spoke.

"They are here," she said in a low voice, "because they bear the mark. The mark is on everyone in this room except yourself. Look at that old man." She pointed to an old man who was then passing by; and, as I looked at him, I saw that there was a crimson streak round his neck. I glanced again at my companion, and perceived with terror that what I had taken

for the glow of the window-glass, was really a mark like that printed on the neck of the old man. I fell back; but she, just as if she could read what was passing in my mind, placed her hand on my arm and made me sit down again. I was forced to obey her touch; for the magnetic power with which I had in fancy endowed the glance of the picture was a reality in the woman of my dream. She went on with her story, and, like the wedding-guest, "I could not choose but hear."

"We bear the mark," she said, "because our hands have all been stained with the blood of our fellow-men. We are murderers, all of us. I will tell you my own story, if you will listen to me; but first look at that tall man with the fair golden hair and beard, the man who is passing there by the fireplace. Look at his face, scan closely every feature, let them be graven on your remembrance as on a tablet of steel, so that you may know him when you see him again—for you will see him. You look at me with horror; but perhaps you will think of me more kindly when you have heard all I have to tell you."

Even before the dream-woman drew my attention to this man, I had noticed him. A more stately and commanding presence it would have been hard to find. The beauty of his face was like that of those glorious portraits of himself which Dürer has left us. The expression was placid and noble, though the man wore an artisan's garb. It seemed to me a faultless face, so long as I saw it in profile; but when he turned it full towards me, I remarked that it bore an ugly blemish, in the shape of a scar running from the corner of the mouth diagonally across the cheek towards the temple. The livid hue of the scar was rendered yet more ghastly by contrast with the fresh colour of the rest of the face. The teeth were regular and perfectly white, and the beard, much fairer than the hair of the head, shone golden in the sunlight.

The woman watched him out of sight, and when he had disappeared, she said:

"Of all the murderers in this room, there is not one so base and villainous as that man. Under the mask of friendship he first wormed himself into my confidence; then he robbed me; and then he killed my son—my only child!"

"But justice has overtaken him?" I said.

"Yes, swift and righteous; no tardy

affair of judge and jury. While my boy was lying dead in the house, they talked of patience, and of the certainty that the murderer would be found out; but I knew where the real assassin was to be found. I went to him straight, and for want of a better weapon I stabbed him to the heart with the dagger-pin I wore in my hair."

When I awoke, it seemed to me as if I had simply closed my eyes in a crowded room, and opened them in the same room perfectly still and empty of all human presence, my own excepted. The change was no greater than this, save in one particular, and this was that the lady's portrait was once more restored to its place in the heavy gilded frame. In the half-consciousness of my sudden awakening I could hardly persuade myself that I had been dreaming. All was so strangely real, so entirely unlike the ordinary recall from impossible whimsicalities, which is one's common experience of a summons from dreamland. The present reality was so strangely like the vision of a minute ago, that, when I rose fully awake from my seat, I could hardly persuade myself that my dream had really been a dream and nothing else.

I left Clayfield a week after this, and went back to my work strong and well. I took no holiday that autumn, because I had been absent from my desk so long already, and it was not until the following May that I had another spell of freedom. By chance my holiday then fell at a most propitious time, for I was able to join an artist friend of mine, by name Mackintosh, in a ramble he had planned in search of detailed studies for a picture he was then painting. Mackintosh was a clever fellow, and was steadily rising in his profession. I had often seen the sketch for the picture in question. I believe I had myself suggested the subject after reading Goethe's life, and I felt a natural interest in watching its growth into a finished work. The subject was Goethe's first visit to Fredrika, the daughter of the Alsatian pastor. Mackintosh had been more than usually successful in his treatment of the figures, and was anxious to have all his details strictly true. He proposed, therefore, to go for a fortnight's walk in Alsace, and look about in the villages lying on the slopes of the Vosges for a parsonage-house, like the one in which the fair Fredrika might have lived.

We stayed a few days at Strassburg, and

then set forth into the country. We enquired where we would be likely to find what we wanted, and, finally, decided to repair, in the first instance, to the village of Dreibrücken, and make it our headquarters for a few days. The landlady of our hotel at Strassburg took a kindly interest in our movements, and when she heard where we were going, she gave us some useful hints as to our route. "Whether you stay a month or only a day at Dreibrücken, there is one thing I can promise you—that you will be well treated by Madame Degener at The White Swan. Madame Degener is the kinswoman of some friends of mine here, and I know that her house is well spoken of in all the country. She would treat you well in any case, but, if you say I sent you to her, I will guarantee you fare like Princes."

At the station where we left the train, we found a very primitive kind of omnibus bound for Dreibrücken. We were the only passengers, and we got up beside the driver, a garrulous old man, who told us much more than we wanted to know about every farmhouse that we passed, and every old woman we met on the road. Mackintosh's easel and traps aroused his keenest interest, and he was running over with curiosity to know who we were, and what could be the reason of our coming to Dreibrücken. We kept him as much as possible in the dark, but of course we were bound to tell him where we were going to alight, and as soon as he knew this fact, he broke out into the most enthusiastic praise of Madame Degener and all that concerned her. Madame Degener had the best wine in the district—aye, in the whole of Alsace. She brewed the best beer in France—for the old fellow studiously ignored the treaty of Frankfort and all its provisions. People might boast about the fine things to be had in Paris, but where in Paris, he should like to know, could you get such cheese, such conserves, such liqueurs, as Madame Degener compounded?

Thus it appeared that Madame Degener had honour in her own country, as well as in Strassburg. We began to be curious to see this pearl of Alsatian housewives, and to speculate as to what might be her strong point. Mackintosh, who was a bit of a bon vivant, was planning a toothsome supper, when the omnibus stopped suddenly before what seemed to be a cottage, and a very poor cottage too. It stood close to the roadside, and only the door and one broken window relieved the

squalid expanse of wall which, one time or other, had been white. The driver got down; and, having opened the door with a great clatter, began to take down our luggage.

"Stop," said Mackintosh, making a grab at his paint-box; "we are going to The White Swan, and not to this hole."

"Yes, monsieur, it is so," said the driver; "this is the place, and here is Mdlle. Adèle, who will take your things for you. Bon jour, Mdlle. Adèle," he called out to a stalwart lady of about five-and-forty, who had just appeared at the door. "I have brought you two messieurs to-day, braves garçons both of them. I am always bringing you something worth having. I expect I shall bring you a sweetheart before long."

Mdlle. Adèle had not been favoured by nature in the matter of personal charms. Her waist was of vast proportions; and she had the arm of a blacksmith, and the gait of a ploughman. She gave a contemptuous reply to the railery of the ancient Jehu, and then began a string of questions about some parcel which had gone astray, totally ignoring us and our belongings in the middle of the road. At last, after having shouted her parting adjurations to the retreating charioteer, she picked up our half-dozen parcels as if they had been so many straws, and, nodding towards the house, she let it be seen that it was her will that we should follow her. As we passed in at the door we saw that The White Swan was not visible from the road. It was built round two sides of a cloister-like yard, a large house with a high-pitched roof, studded with a double row of dormer-windows. Inside, the passages and staircases were vast and cavernous; but our rooms, which overlooked the garden on the other side, were as pleasant as need be. We ordered our supper, feeling a little disappointed that Madame Degener had not welcomed us in person; but the meal to which we sat down consoled us. It was admirable in every way. Mdlle. Adèle had thawed a little by this time, and, when she had finished serving us, she sat down at our table and vouchsafed to talk to us quite in a friendly way. Then we learned that Madame Degener was away from home. She had been called to the sick-bed of a kinswoman, and had taken with her her only child, "le petit Hector, the prettiest boy in all Alsace," Adèle added in a tone which seemed to tell that she lamented the

child's absence as much as, if not more than, she did the mother's. Madame Degener, however, was expected back in three days' time.

Our quarters were most comfortable. The absolute contrast, both to what we had left behind us, and to the ordinary English hotel life abroad, made it all the more pleasant. Mackintosh soon got together his studies; and, after a week, we might have moved on, but we determined to spend all our time at Dreibrücken. In the meantime, Madame Degener still tarried by the bedside of her aunt. The old woman was better, Adèle informed us, but the long watching was beginning to tell, even upon the robust frame of her mistress. "I have sent ever so many messages to her telling her to come home," Adèle said; "but it is always the same with her. When once she sets her hand to anything she will carry it through, though she may be ready to faint. She will knock herself up, and then I shall have to nurse her and look after the house as well."

The days passed pleasantly enough. I had brought plenty of books with me, and I dabbled a little in water-colours while Mackintosh was at work on his cottage porches and Alsatian costumes. The post brought us few letters, but one day there came for me a printed form which I always received twice in the year—a certificate which the Court of Chancery required me to sign and return, before it would pay over the interest on a small sum which it guarded for me. When I signed this form in the United Kingdom it was necessary that my signature should be witnessed by certain authorities, and, if it should be signed abroad, there was a provision to the effect that my identity and existence should be testified to by the mayor, or syndic, or burgomaster of the place where I might happen to be. I consulted Adèle. Of course there was a syndic of Dreibrücken, Peter Forschmann, the brewer who lived close by the old bridge. Peter Forschmann was a man of substance, it appeared, and always ready to do a kindness to a stranger, especially if the stranger should happen to be a guest of The White Swan.

That same afternoon, I walked over to the brewery. It did not seem to be on a very large scale, but the fragrant smell of malt and hops, which issued from the steaming brew-house, was a testimony to the purity of the produce of Herr Forschmann's vats. The syndic was there with his

apron on, working away with his men, who were emptying a huge mash-tub. As he came towards me through the circling clouds of steam, I could see that he was a tall, handsome man of the true German type. He brushed away some grains of malt out of his full yellow beard, and, greeting me courteously, enquired what he could do for me. The signing and sealing were soon done, and then Herr Forschmann insisted that I should go over to his house and taste some famous three-year-old beer of his. As we sat chatting over the generous fluid, I found, from his conversation, that he was a man of education. He told me that he had studied chemistry in the German university of L—, and he bore a physical proof of the truth of this assertion in the shape of a large scar on his handsome face, the result, no doubt, of some student duel. His conversation interested me greatly, and I could not help wondering how it was that such a man should have buried himself in such a place as Dreibrücken. He seemed pleased that chance had thrown us together, for he gave me a cordial invitation to repeat my visit whenever I felt disposed to do so.

"I will warrant," he said, as he shook my hand at parting, "that you did not expect to find such a hostess as Frau Degener at Dreibrücken. I dare not ask you to taste my rough fare after having eaten at her table, and she is a good woman as well as a good housekeeper—no better in all the country round."

THE LAMENT OF NORMAN LESLIE.

It's oh ! for Norman Leslie and fair St. Andrew's town,

For the golden lilies flaunt them free, the lion flag is down ;

The flag that flew for freedom, for the Word and Gospel, when

The least lips in Scotland prayed, for Norman and his men.

For the Regent swore in Holyrood, as her kinsman swore in France—

And all the fiery scorn of Guise was in the lady's glance—

She would hunt the rebel gospeller, like a wild beast to his den ;

I wot the quarry turned at bay, with Norman and his men.

What though the blood of Beatoun was red upon his hand,

The ashes of the martyrs were crying through the land ;

It was a goodly vengeance the Master wrought us then,

And the heart of bonnie Scotland, was with Norman and his men.

All day the cannon thundered on the towers upon the rocks,

But Rothes held the ramparts, 'neath the flashing eyes of Knox ;

The nobles fought with sword and spear, the Church with stake and pen,
And firm 'gainst priests and statesmen stood, our Norman and his men.

They were leaguered from the moorland, they were leaguered from the sea,
The ramparts crumbled 'neath the shot that showered ceaselessly ;

But bravely stood the soldiers brought, from Lowland hill and glen :

There was neither fear nor falter amid Norman and his men.

But famine and French bullets at last had wrought their will,

And the leaders met in council, pale, faint, but dauntless still ;

Harder than wounds or hunger the fate that forced them, when

They yielded them to France's faith, our Norman and his men.

To France's faith, not Arran's, with his shifting, restless eyes ;

To France's faith, not false Lorraine's, queening 'neath Scottish skies ;

Was there never word of warning, or note of presage then ?

They yielded them to France's faith, our Norman and his men.

Now better had they died in mail, each steadfast in his place ;

Now better had they trusted to England's bitter grace ;

Couched with the red deer in his brake, the wild wolf in his den,

Than lipped to a treacherous word, our Norman and his men.

The brave North Sea was dancing below the ruined hold,

The brave North sun was touching the waves to living gold ;

When down to France's galleys, by two, by six, by ten,

They left the walls they held so long, our Norman and his men.

And with them marched the preacher, great soul and feeble frame—

Not a man among us, sea to sea, but thrills to Knox's name !

He fought for us with earnest soul, with fearless lip and pen,

He passed for us to slavery, with Norman and his men.

Long laid in bitter bondage, long chained to shameful oar,

They served and suffered ere again they trod their native shore ;

There was wail in many a castle, there was dool in many a glen,

Yet we gloried in them, fight or fall, our Norman and his men.

OUR DUTY TOWARDS OUR NEIGHBOUR.

CONTINUATIONS, sequels, and after-thoughts have very rarely been successful in literature. The reproduction of Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller in "Master Humphrey's Clock" failed to interest a public, which had been excited to an unprecedented degree by the original appearance of those worthies ; the strangely pathetic effect of the "Shabby Genteel Story" evaporated altogether, when its

hapless heroine was reintroduced in "Philip"; the later voyages of Robinson Crusoe and of Gulliver not infrequently approach the confines of tedium; Athos, Porthos, Aramis, and D'Artagnan suffer greatly from the effects of frequent resurrection; and there came a time when readers felt that they had had enough of Pendennis, his friends, and his uncle; and when even the inhabitants of Barsetshire outstayed their welcome.

It would have been well for the lively and generally well-informed French gentleman who writes under the name of Max O'Rell, if this truth had impressed itself upon his mind, and if he had resisted that fatal temptation to repeat a signal success, which has strewn the shores of literature with so many wrecks. Unfortunately he has succumbed, as many greater than he have succumbed before him, and has allowed himself to weaken the effect of one of the best popular books about England ever written by a Frenchman, by working up the remnants of his material into another volume, which, to put it mildly, is decidedly inferior to the first.

There was a freshness about "John Bull et son Ile"; an obvious desire to record, faithfully and carefully, the impression which England and her institutions had made upon the mind of a fairly dispassionate foreigner, who had lived a long time in London and had made good use of his opportunities; which went a long way to make up for the strange errors into which he occasionally fell, and for the extraordinary blunders he sometimes made. The book became a success both in its French and English form. It was promptly followed by another, "Les Filles de John Bull," which was not distinguished by many of the better qualities of its predecessor, but which also achieved considerable popularity; and the series is now brought to a close—or so, at least, it may be hoped—by one more volume, "Les Chers Voisins," by which the author seeks to add to his laurels.

And it must be distinctly understood, on the authority of the author himself, that his objects are purely philanthropic and patriotic. To make Frenchmen and Englishmen understand one another better; to sweep away the ridiculously erroneous ideas, which the people of each country are apt to form of their neighbours; to promote a more cordial alliance between the two countries, which are "in the advance-guard of the march of progress";

are the high objects which the writer has set before himself. It would be a mistake to suppose that any consideration of the reasonable probabilities of a large sale, and of a consequently satisfactory pecuniary result, has influenced the writer in any way. He is careful to disabuse our minds of any such sordid idea, by a violent attack upon the critic of a paper "as pretentious as it is little read," as he says, who ventured to remark on the appearance of "Les Filles de John Bull," that the success of the first book had instigated M. O'Rell to write a second with a view to attracting the attention and the money of the public. Critics of this sort, M. O'Rell describes, quoting Carlyle, as "dirty puppies"; and compares them, on his own account, to men who live on the earnings of their wives, and preserve their own self-respect by occasionally beating them if they are not sufficiently submissive.

This would be a severe blow for the critic who laid himself open to this convincing and logical reply, if M. O'Rell did not, unfortunately, expose himself, a little further on, to a retort of the *tu quoque* order, from which no amount of ingenuity can enable him to escape.

In eulogising the conduct of the literary executors and legatees of Victor Hugo (who refused to accept any of the profits which might accrue from the sale of the posthumous works of the illustrious poet), M. O'Rell falls foul of Mr. Froude for publishing the memoirs and correspondence of Carlyle, at the risk, as he says, of executing not Mr. Carlyle's wishes but his reputation, and clearly intimates his opinion that Mr. Froude's action was prompted solely by mercenary considerations, by adding, "if we are sentimental in France, you are deucedly practical in England." That Lord Wolseley and Lord Alcester should have received pecuniary rewards for their services in the Ashantee and Egyptian wars—at both of which M. O'Rell sneers with a great deal of very un-neighbourly virulence and spitefulness—seems to this high-minded writer a monstrous absurdity. Lord Wolseley is described as looking on the prospect of the Gordon expedition simply as being likely to afford an "ample harvest of honours and bank-notes"; is consoled with on the fall of Khartoum, because, if it had held out a little longer he might have been an Earl with another addition to his income; and is, indeed, vilified and held up to ridicule at every possible opportunity with a

pertinacity which is surprising until it is remembered that, although the French are by no means jealous of the position we have gained in Egypt—so M. O'Rell assures us—they certainly do not like it; that Lord Wolseley is an opponent of the Channel Tunnel; and that all opponents of the Channel Tunnel are actuated by absurd suspicions and prejudices, and are, consequently, more or less enemies of France.

Carlyle, again, comes in for plenty of the mud of which M. O'Rell has plenty to throw at anybody who is not a thick-and-thin partisan of France, mainly because his sympathies were with the Germans, and not with the French, in 1870.

That unhappy war! A great deal of the bitterness against England which M. O'Rell now and then displays, is explained by his repeated complaints that we would not help France against Germany, as France, in 1854, helped us against Russia. It is nothing to the purpose, probably, in M. O'Rell's eyes, either that the French expedition to the Crimea was entirely a judicious speculation of the Emperor's, who wisely saw that foreign war would distract attention from domestic affairs, and that a few victories would vastly improve the prospects of the Empire; or that we had no political or other reason whatever for interfering in matters with which we had nothing to do, and for taking up arms against Germany in 1870. But such considerations were, no doubt, dictated by insular jealousy and selfishness.

This affectation of disinterestedness, this sneering at people who consent to be paid for their private work or public services, is, to speak the plain truth, as disingenuous as it is foolish. What does M. O'Rell do with the money he receives from his publishers, for instance? The question, which would be simply impertinent, if he did not himself suggest it, becomes quite to the purpose under the circumstances. If there is anything to be ashamed of in being paid for your work, how came it that Victor Hugo left behind him a large fortune? If distinguished public service—and not the less distinguished because M. O'Rell cannot see it in that light—ought to go unrewarded in this country, why should it be recognised by the bestowal of substantial pudding elsewhere? It is, at all events, better that the successful soldier should be rewarded by his own countrymen than that he should make a good thing out of the plunder of his opponents

—such a good thing, for example, as was made by some of Napoleon's Marshals, not to mention the plums which fell to the share of the Emperor himself and his family.

The objects of M. O'Rell's latest book, however, as stated by himself, are, briefly, to teach Frenchmen and Englishmen to abandon the absurd prejudice with which they too often regard each other; to give up their mutual jealousies; to refuse any longer to allow ignorance or malice to set them by the ears; to recognise each other's good rather than bad qualities; and to cease to laugh at the peculiarities of their neighbours, or to draw invidious comparisons between each other's manners, customs, habits, and ways of life and thought. M. O'Rell, in fact, is anxious to bring into the closest, most respectful, and most loving friendship, "these two nations, the happiest, the richest, the freest, the most intelligent, the most hardworking, the pioneers of modern civilisation," notwithstanding that the characters of the two neighbours are perfectly opposite, and that their common interests are so frequently at stake that it seems probable that "the only respect that they will feel for each other for a considerable time to come will arise from the number of ironclads which they can respectively put into line of battle."

As M. O'Rell very justly remarks, the result at which he wishes to arrive ought to be the dream of every sensible man on both sides of the Channel, and it is, without doubt, most desirable that the people of both countries should learn that they are not so white as they make themselves out to be, nor yet so black as they are painted by their neighbours.

Whether the way in which M. O'Rell has set about this good work is calculated to promote the ends he has in view, is quite another matter. If, employing his very considerable knowledge of England, he had contented himself with pointing out the mistakes into which Frenchmen commonly fall as regards this country, he would have done good service on the one side. If he had demonstrated to English people the absurdity of a great many of their theories about France and Frenchmen, he would have done good service on the other. As it is he proceeds by the dangerous path of continual comparison; not infrequently showing himself to be to the full as prejudiced, and nearly as ignorant, as those whom he takes it upon himself to rebuke.

It is very possible that the English character is, as M. O'Rell says it is, at one and the same time mean, surly, pretentious, egotistical, bigoted, well-informed, intelligent, and affable. Very likely we are all tenacious, hardy, robust, ready to die rather than give up even a football when the game has once begun, thorough, doing nothing by halves; a curious mixture of the lion, the mule, and the octopus. The Englishman may be capable of playing a thousand different parts; may always be ready to do at Rome as the Romans do; may be extreme in everything, full of violent contrasts, and yet always guided by reason; may be patriot, publican, Pharisee, worshipper at once of Mammon and Jehovah; may be, of all men on earth, the most occupied with heavenly matters, and the least detached from worldly interests. It takes all sorts of people to make a world, and it takes all sorts of qualities to make a national character. Given a not excessive amount of exaggeration, and M. O'Rell's portrait is probably, in the main, true enough. But it is to the prejudices of a "cher voisin"—in which the trace of certain recent events; not, of course, in any way inspired by political jealousy; is to be pretty clearly seen—rather than to the calm results of scientific observation, that we owe the further description of ourselves as being, in the singular number, a man on whose word you may rely as you would on a good Toledo blade; in the plural, a nation which has often deserved the epithet "perfidious" (our old friend "Perfidie Albion" on duty again). "... at home prosecuting everybody who is guilty of cruelty to animals, unless the animal be a lawful wife, and abroad putting a price on the head of a recalcitrant enemy"—M. Olivier Pain, presumably, to wit.

But let us see how M. O'Rell practises the doctrine he preaches, that the "cher voisins" should, on no account, speak ill of each other.

It is one of M. O'Rell's peculiarities, that he is convinced that English people are educated to believe that we conquered the Russians in the Crimea with a handful of men, and that he has brought himself to the point of thinking that he has rarely met an Englishman, who had ever heard of the part which General Bosquet and his Zouaves took at Inkerman. Even if this were true, it may be remarked that it would only prove that M. O'Rell's English acquaintances must be curiously ill-informed people, and subject to a hallucina-

tion which prevails extensively in France, and is illustrated by some big battle pictures—by Gustave Doré, we think—at Versailles, in which Inkerman is shown as being nothing but Zouaves performing prodigies of valour on behalf of half-a-dozen or so English soldiers in the last extremity. But further M. O'Rell declares—and as a teacher in an English public school, M. O'Rell must be right—that English ignorance on such matters is profound. Our geography-books contain hundreds of pages about England and her dependencies, and a couple of pages, more or less contemptuous, about France. Our boys are taught—"on apprend à ce jeune Anglais," M. O'Rell expressly insists—that England beat France at Malplaquet and at Waterloo off her own bat, and that, as we have already seen, she conquered Russia in the Crimea, all by herself. Prince Eugène, General Blücher, and General Pélissier are altogether unknown to English youth; and English boys, on leaving school, are surprised to find that Christopher Columbus, Gutenberg, Luther, and Galileo were not British subjects. Rubbish, M. O'Rell—rubbish pure and simple. That there is in both countries plenty of deplorable ignorance on such matters, and on matters of very much greater importance besides, nobody can deny, but, when you say that English boys are absolutely taught such imbecilities, you are writing—consciously or not, we will not pretend to guess—for your Parisian gallery, a care for whose approbation betrays you into numberless absurdities.

It is perhaps in the interests of this same gallery that M. O'Rell, who knows the English climate perfectly well, and did it fair justice in "John Bull et son Ile," produces the stale stock jokes about the English atmosphere. Thus, in Trafalgar Square, you can see Nelson on the top of his pillar, "quand il fait beau!"—the note of exclamation, no doubt, serving to indicate the rarity of the circumstance—and a newly-married couple, with whom M. O'Rell struck up an acquaintance on board a Channel steam-boat, are described as going to spend their honeymoon "amidst the English fogs." All Englishmen who are insulted, either in their own persons, or by deputy through their wives, are quite content to be paid for their discomfort or dishonour, instead of going out to fight, like the chivalrous Frenchman, and satisfying wounded honour by a sword-scratch or by the exchange of innocuous pistol-shots. English people

whom M. O'Rell meets in France, and who try to talk French, say, "Aoh !" and "vô pôvez," and "moa"—just like the gentlemen with the big front teeth, long red whiskers, ill-made grey suits, and Scotch caps, who represent England in the eyes of the ingenious French caricaturists, and whose introduction on the stage M. O'Rell finds so eminently calculated to inspire in the hearts of the spectators a great respect and admiration for England.

It is true that M. O'Rell has outgrown the awe with which he at first regarded the Lord Mayor, "Milord Maire," although, once upon a time, that dignitary seemed to him the greatest potentate in the kingdom. Unfortunately Sir Robert Fowler destroyed that fond illusion, when he declined, following precedent, to put to the Court of Common Council a vote of condolence with the family of Victor Hugo. And here it is strange to remark how very touchy even a generally sensible man like M. O'Rell becomes, at the slightest mention of the deceased poet. He must know perfectly well—could have known, anyhow, if he does not—that the present Lord Mayor is a scholar and a gentleman, and could have been actuated in the course he adopted by none but worthy motives. But M. O'Rell, untrue, as he so often is to his avowed purpose of conciliation, and of smoothing the way for a better understanding between "ces chers voisins," cannot refrain from the contemptuous comment that "it is very probable that the Lord Mayor of London had never heard of Victor Hugo." And, even if this had been the case, Sir Robert Fowler would not have been much worse off than M. Thiers—a still more representative personage, and one of the cultured men of intellect of whom France is justly proud—who once declared in the semi-publicity of a reception at the Elysées that England had only produced one painter, and that he had forgotten even that exceptional individual's name !

According to M. O'Rell, the two countries have shown the greatest ingenuity in willfully taking contrary sides in all sorts of matters. A pawnbroker in England is, in slang language, your uncle ; in France, your aunt. A vicar in England has a curate to assist him. In France—and, of course, more correctly—the curate is assisted by a vicar. In France the Channel is called the Pas de Calais ; in England, the Straits of Dover. In England we get wet to the skin ; in France, to the bones.

The words "to edit" and "to publish" have exactly opposite meanings as used in French and in English. In driving we keep to the left ; the French to the right. Worse than all, the practical English have refused to adopt the decimal system, because it is already in use in France !

These matters will appear trivial, and trivial indeed they are, but, unfortunately, when one sets to work bookmaking on the strength of a former success in the same line ; whether one does it for fame, or out of a philanthropical desire to bring two great countries together, or with a view to payment ; one often has to fill up one's pages with a good many trivialities. Padding is an operation which demands a good deal of rubbish sometimes.

The exigencies and hurry of bookmaking, as M. O'Rell's book very well shows, also involve a good deal of repetition ; a good many slipshod mistakes, such, for instance, as taking Mark Twain as an example of "l'humour britannique," as M. O'Rell calls it ; and a good deal of self-contradiction, as in his complaint that English people are very wrong to judge of France by Paris only, and his subsequent admission that when one wants to say "the French," it is generally enough to say "the Parisians," or his declaration that "it is not necessary to penetrate far into English or French life to study the character of the two nations ; the streets of Paris and London furnish the observer with ample materials every day."

As to M. O'Rell's views as to English political institutions, and especially the House of Lords ; the comparative immorality of London and Paris ; the different ways of regarding women, which obtain in the two countries ; the merits of the widely opposite systems of education and of the bringing up of young people which obtain in the two countries ; M. O'Rell has a good deal to say, but nothing more, for the most part, than he has said already in his preceding books. So many English readers are familiar with M. O'Rell's views on these subjects that it is not necessary to dwell upon them at length. But anybody who wants to know what M. O'Rell has to say may be recommended to turn to "John Bull et son Ile" rather than to "Les Filles de John Bull," and very much rather than to "Les Chers Voisins."

However, even if M. O'Rell's, doubtless well-meant, contribution to the good cause of promoting friendly feelings between ourselves and his countrymen, cannot be

accepted as an altogether satisfactory effort; and if it is impossible to give anything like unreserved praise to his book as a literary work; his descriptions of the French bourgeois and of the French peasant, besides having an unmistakeable air of being true to nature, are unquestionably interesting. And, as they are more particularly valuable just now, when the question of small agricultural holdings is coming forward so prominently as a probable factor in the politics of the future, we may conclude with an abridgment of M. O'Rell's description of the ways of life and thought of Jacques Bonhomme; of Jacqueline, his wife; and of Joseph Prudhomme, his cousin, who lives in cities.

Jacques Bonhomme is a small landowner; whose love of his country, of his cottage, of his field, of his cow, of his independence, and of the money of which he takes so much care, is an innate sentiment. If you want to make him happy, pay him, when he brings you a cask of cider or a load of wood, in five-franc pieces. That is the sort of money he prefers. He will take gold without repugnance, but he makes a face if you give him bank-notes; and it is ten to one that he would give you in charge of the police, if you were to offer him a cheque. His clothing is worth four or five francs, but his blouse was new when he bought it, and is as natural to him as a black coat is to people who habitually wear such garments. His food costs him something under sixpence a day, but it is wholesome and abundant. He goes to bed and gets up with the sun, by way of saving candles; and, as he is never ill, he has no doctor's bill to pay. When he dies, it is in his own bed, and he has not to be buried at the expense of the parish.

Although there may be poverty, there is no pauperism in his village, for Jacques is always ready to give a bowl of soup to a neighbour whom he knows to be in want, although he has no pity for the idle.

He troubles himself very little about politics, but there is one government which he distrusts, and whose return he fears—the government of the priests.

He is just beginning to write a little, but cares for that accomplishment only for the sake of making out his accounts. Letter-writing is a frivolous amusement which costs money, and which he, accordingly, does not appreciate.

He is happy enough to be a native of a fertile soil, which supplies all his wants; and, if you talk to him about emigration, he

asks what crime he has committed that he should be condemned to transportation. He is the most domesticated creature in existence, and scarcely believes in the map of the world, because it does not show his favourite village. His curé and his schoolmaster have told him that the earth is round, and he is, accordingly, quite content to believe it. It is at a market, or a fair, or wherever his talent for haggling and bargaining have full play that he is happiest.

Jacqueline, his wife, is the fortune of France; laborious, sober, thrifty, she works in the fields, goes to the neighbouring market, and yet finds time to attend to her household cares. Not an hour of her existence is passed in idleness. Even when she walks home from market, she knits stockings all the way. It is she who hides away the five-franc pieces at the bottom of her wardrobe. She leaves shares and bonds to the bourgeois, having no liking for paper. What she wants is a cow or a field. Her daughter wears neither flounces nor feathers, but is dressed in a plain frock of coarse serge, and wears a little cap as white as snow; her plump and rosy cheeks showing that she is healthy; and her large eyes, which look at you like field-daisies, proving that she is pure.

To sum up, M. O'Rell declares that the peasants of France are not only her fortune, but, in their rustic simplicity, her generous heart, and apostrophises a country life with all the fervour of a poet who can recognise to his Arcadia no seamy side, whose Corydon and Phillis have none of the troubles, passions, weaknesses, and other difficulties incidental to human nature, which make town life so terrible. The picture is a pretty one, but, as we all know there is a good deal of shabby, dirty canvas on the other side, we may perhaps fail to share M. O'Rell's enthusiasm.

Joseph Prudhomme; whom the English—says M. O'Rell, forgetting his own precepts, and pointing his description at the expense of his neighbour—are pleased to look upon as a bully, full of dreams of glory and conquest; is a peaceable, domestic, jog-trot *rentier*, not much of a speculator, economical and laborious, and anxious only to amass the modest independence which will enable him to retire from business and live at his ease. "Thrift," says M. O'Rell, "is the genius of France." The peasant buys his bit of land; the artisan puts his money into the savings bank; the shopkeeper

invests in Government stocks. To get an independent income, of from five to ten thousand francs a year, is Joseph's object. His honesty in business is almost proverbial. He is exact even to meanness. He rarely marries before he is thirty; but when he does take a wife, he makes a friend and confidant of her, leaving all his domestic affairs entirely to her, and consulting her in all important matters of business, so that, knowing everything, she can help him in everything. He is the most domestic of men, and is as good a father as he is a husband; but it must be owned that his intellectual life is almost non-existent. He is content to jog along the road which his fathers have trodden before him, and desires no change in his habits or surroundings.

In fact, M. O'Rell's Jacques, and Jacqueline, and Joseph, are types of an ideal sort of country life, the counterparts of which, *mutatis mutandis*, he will find, if he looks for them, all over the world; just as anybody who should seek for their opposites, would probably find them quite as plentiful in France as among her neighbours.

But there are two sides to every shield, and M. O'Rell has a convenient way of choosing that which is most useful to his purpose, and of ignoring the existence of the other, if it interferes in any way with the coherence and completeness of his argument. Or, to change the metaphor, it may be said that in trying to hold the scales even between the two neighbours, he has only succeeded in proving that the complex differences which separate the two people morally, almost as much as the Channel does physically, can scarcely be weighed with perfect impartiality by a citizen of either country, however careful, or however fair, he may determine to be. The looker-on, who is in no wise concerned except as a spectator, sees most of the game in this case as in so many others, and M. O'Rell altogether fails to make us forget for a moment that he is one of the interested, and consequently prejudiced, players.

COUNT PAOLO'S RING.

A SHORT SERIAL STORY.

CHAPTER VII.

NANCIE found her there when, a little past midnight, she came into the room. The window was open and the blinds still

undrawn, but the gas was turned so low that Nancie could only see dimly a white motionless figure by the window.

"Musing in the twilight, oh, most sentimental of young women!" she said gaily, and she swept across the room and turned up the gas suddenly. "How is the headache?"

"Oh, much better—quite gone."

Angela looked up with bright, dreamy eyes, and there was an absent note in her voice which Nancie's quick ears noticed at once. She came to the window and looked down at Angela.

"That is well; and did you have a very dull evening, dear? Our entertainment was dreary in the extreme," she said brightly; "I was never so much bored in my life. The dinner was good—I will do Carrie justice there—very good, but the company! I feel quite angry that my pretty new dress should be wasted on such an unappreciative set!"

Nancie looked at herself criticisingly in the mirror as she spoke. She was fond of pretty dresses and ornaments, and on this occasion she was dressed more richly than usual in cream lace and satin, with gold and coral necklace and bracelets, and coral pins in her hair. She looked unusually well, Angela thought.

"Dull? No; Sir Noel was here part of the time," she said, and her cheeks flushed brightly.

Nancie's interest in her own appearance subsided; she turned quickly from the glass and regarded Angela with a look of lively interest.

"Oh, indeed! And what did Sir Noel say, my child?" she asked.

"He was not here long—not more than half an hour."

"Ah, but," and Nancie shook her head wisely, "many things may happen in half an hour. Come, tell me." She sank down by Angel's side, and took her hand, and pressed it caressingly to her cheek. "Has the crisis arrived? Are you engaged to him, Angel?"

"Not exactly." Angela's blushes grew still more vivid. "I had not time to answer. Lady Sara sent for him, and he was obliged to go."

"Just like her, horrid old thing! But I suppose he said enough—eh, Angel dear? Of course I knew it was coming; I have watched the progress of events with the deepest interest," Nancie laughed. "Tell me, what did he say?"

"Oh, I don't know!" Angela laughed

and coloured. "And if I did I shouldn't tell you, Miss Nancie. That," and she drew up her dainty head with a little dignified air, "was for my ears alone. But he—oh, Nancie—Nancie!" and now her dignity deserted her, and she hid her lovely, blushing face on Nancie's shoulder, "he said he loved me—had loved me ever since the first time we met! And I never guessed!"

"They all say that, my child." Nancie stroked the flushed cheek tenderly. "I was in hope that a young man of Sir Noel's abilities might have hit upon something more original. Well, I shall be very sorry to lose you, pet—awfully sorry;" and Nancie's bright eyes grew a little dim and misty; "but so long as you are happy——" She put up her face, and kissed Angela tenderly. "And he is such a good fellow. I am sure you will be happy with him—oh, quite sure!" she added, and then something in Angela's face—a wistful, unsatisfied look—startled her, and she hesitated, and then said very gravely: "that is, if you love him. Do you, Angel?"

"I am not quite sure." Angela grew a little paler, and her hands trembled. "I think so, but I am not sure."

"Is there anyone else?"

Nancie looked down at Angela's left hand, and she touched Paolo's ring significantly as she spoke. Angela shook her head.

"Oh no—no one; but I have read, you know, Nancie, of love, in novels and poetry, and I do not think that I feel as the heroines there are said to feel. I am happy—oh yes, very happy—and I feel so proud and honoured by his love; but—ah, now you are laughing at me!"

"I should think so, little goose! You would make anyone laugh," Nancie cried. "Why, what do you expect to feel? You say you are happy—very happy. What more do you want? What more could any reasonable woman desire? Happiness! It comes to very few people in this world, dear. Now and then we think we come near to it—so near that it is almost within our grasp, and we stretch out our hands to take it, and, lo! it is gone. Nay, if you have won it, be content, child. It is more than most people can say."

There was a tone of unusual earnestness in Nancie's voice; her mobile face had changed suddenly, and had grown sad and tired. Angela looked at her in mute surprise. She put up her hand, and stroked Nancie's hair gently.

"Why, Nancie, what a sad speech! And from you of all people! You whose life is all sunshine, all happiness!" she said gently. "Why, Mr. Lansdell was saying only the other day how bright and happy you always were."

"Mr. Lansdell! What does he know about it?" Nancie coloured faintly. "By the way, what a long time it is since he favoured us with a visit. Is he from home, I wonder?"

"No; but Sir Noel told me this evening that he is very much occupied just now. I am afraid you will be very sorry, Nancie," and Angela hesitated; "but there is much sickness in the town, and especially in Mr. Lansdell's parish, just now, and he is very hard worked."

"Sickness?" Nancie looked up eagerly, and with a sudden terror in her eyes. "Not the fever?"

"I am afraid so. It is worst," Angela spoke very reluctantly, but she wished that Nancie should hear the news first from her, "in Green Street."

There was a long silence. Nancie's lips were pressed tightly together; her cheeks had paled suddenly; and she twisted the bracelet round her arm so tightly, that it left a cruel red mark on the soft white flesh. She spoke at last, but it was in a dull, hopeless voice that half frightened Angela.

"I did what I could. I told father what Mr. Lansdell said, and he would not listen. He said that business was bad—that he could not afford to do anything to the houses, and two days afterwards he gave me these," with a little passionate gesture she pointed to the necklace and bracelets. "I had plenty of ornaments. I did not want them, but I never remonstrated. I took them, and I thanked him, and I never thought"—and the girl's voice trembled with suppressed passion—"they were the price of some poor creature's life! Oh, if I had only spoken then—if I had asked him to send back these gewgaws to the jeweller's, and to give me the money instead—perhaps, who knows?—he might have listened, and I might have been spared this reproach!"

"But, Nancie dear, that is nonsense! You speak as if it were your fault—as if the responsibility rested on your shoulders," Angela remonstrated gently.

"That was what he said," Nancie looked up with wild, sad eyes; "Mr. Lansdell, I mean. He said that we could not, like Pilate, wash our hands and say, 'I am

guiltless.' That, when once we recognised the existence of an evil, there rested upon us the responsibility of doing all we could to remove that evil. That was what he said, and it is true—I know it is."

"Perhaps Sir Noel heard an exaggerated report. It may not be so bad as we fear," Angela said hopefully.

"Oh, I dare say it is true enough. Both Mr. Lansdell and Dr. Munroe were to have been at Carrie's this evening, and they both sent excuses. They were too busy. Carrie was very indignant, and I wondered—but I understand now," Nancie added gravely. "He—Mr. Lansdell, I mean—told me a month ago, that if nothing was done, this would be the result. And nothing was done—nothing can be done now," she added, and there was a hopeless ring in her voice that touched Angela keenly.

"Oh yes, my dear! I don't think it will prove such a serious matter as you seem to think," she said cheerfully; "but, even if it does, there is plenty that we can do to help. You can give wine, and food, and all sorts of comforts."

"In fact, we can lock the stable-door after the horse is stolen," said Nancie, with her bitter smile. "Oh yes, that is easy enough."

She rose from her seat by Angela's side, and walked slowly across the room. As she passed the mirror she paused and looked at herself, at her costly dress, at her gleaming ornaments on her neck and arms, and a sudden shudder shook her whole frame. With a passionate sob she snatched the necklace from her neck, the bracelets from her arms, and flung them in a little glittering heap on Angela's knee.

"Oh, take them away—hide them from me! I hate the sight of them!" she said fiercely, and then ran swiftly out of the room.

Angela followed her after a moment's hesitation, but when she reached the door of Nancie's room, it was closed and locked, and she did not like to ask for admittance. She went back to her own apartment sadly enough. Her tranquil happiness seemed clouded and almost blotted out by the remembrance of Nancie's suffering, troubled face. Nancie, who was so rarely in trouble, who prided herself on her philosophy, her indifference to small annoyances and troubles, who was always so bright, and cheerful, and merry!

"I almost wish I had not told her to-night," Angela thought. "I dare say she was

tired and excited; to-morrow she will take a brighter view," and then a sudden thought which was like a revelation to her flashed across her mind, and she gave a little soft laugh. "Oh, how stupid I am! Of course that is it. She is anxious about Mr. Lansdell; no wonder she was so excited. How anxious I should feel if Noel"—and, even in the darkness, the hot blushes flushed into Angela's face—"were in like danger! Dear old Nancie! And I never thought of that."

Nancie next morning was apparently as cheerful and bright as usual. She was sitting with Angela in the morning-room when a servant entered with Sir Noel's card, and she looked at Angela and smiled significantly.

"Show Sir Noel in here," she said, and then, as the servant withdrew, she ran across the room and opened the window. "I will retire gracefully, and leave the lovers to dual solitude and bliss," she said with a little mocking curtsy.

"You won't do anything of the kind," Angela cried, and she flew to the window, but Nancie was too quick for her, and was already outside. She laughed and kissed her hand gaily as she flew across the lawn.

"There's nothing half so sweet in life, as young love's dreams,
And oh, 'tis a thousand pities that love is not what it seems!"

she sang gaily.

The clear, mocking voice rang across the lawn, and the words fell distinctly on Sir Noel's ears as he entered the morning-room. His face flushed, and his eyes brightened, as he came hastily to Angela's side.

"Well, Angel," he said, and he took her hands and looked down tenderly into her lovely face—made lovelier than ever now, with the blushes, and smiles, and the new sweet shyness which love had brought there, "and what is my answer to be?" he said.

"What you will."

Angela's voice faltered. Her eyes drooped beneath his ardent gaze; but she did not draw her hands away, and she yielded willingly to his embrace, and only blushed brightly when he kissed her, and thanked her, and called her his darling, his beautiful sweetheart. She was quite sure now that she loved him. The doubts and mistrust which had puzzled her the night before, had quite disappeared. She loved him, and she was perfectly happy

and content. Only when, by-and-by, he took a ring from his little finger, and saying that she must wear it until he got one more fitting, would have drawn from her finger the ring which Paolo had placed there two years ago, she drew back and shook her head.

"Not there—put it here," she said, and she pointed to the third finger on the right hand.

Sir Noel looked surprised.

"Nonsense! You don't know our English customs, my dearest. This"—and he took her left hand—"is the proper finger."

"Very well"—but Angela spoke rather reluctantly—"put it there."

"But you must not wear both."

"Why not?"

"Oh!" Sir Noel twisted his moustache and looked annoyed, and cast a disapproving glance at the innocent ornament. "You must not wear any ring but mine on that finger, sweetheart—certainly not one given you by another man," he added. "Come, let me take it off."

But Angela shook her head decisively.

"No," she said very quietly, but with a firm tone in her voice which rather surprised Sir Noel. "I will wear both if you like; but this," and she touched the ring tenderly, "certainly. It shall never leave my finger while I live."

The annoyed expression deepened in Sir Noel's face; he pulled his moustache, and looked and felt angry and disappointed. Angela had grown very pale, but the resolute look round her lips did not waver, and she looked at him with grave, steadfast eyes.

"Angela, tell me one thing. Was it a love-gift?" he said impatiently, and he caught her hand and held it tightly in his own.

Angela laughed softly.

"Oh, how foolish you are! Why, you asked me that before," she said. "No; it was no love-gift. It was only a remembrance! I never had a lover before you," and she smiled, and blushed, and looked up with such an exquisite smile that Sir Noel forgot his jealousy in his delight at her loveliness, and kissed her again. "There, give me the ring." She took it from his hand and slipped it on her finger. "Now, are you content?"

"I should be quite content if you would take that clumsy thing off," Sir Noel said. "What is the design?" He bent and

looked at the ring closely. "Two hands clasped above a dagger? Truly, a suitable ring for a lady to wear!" he added, and his voice grew impatient again.

"Or for a lover to give to his sweetheart," Angela said with a smile. "Ah, you may be quite content. To wear that ring means no disloyalty to you."

"Since you assure me of that," and Sir Noel bent his tall head and kissed the hand he held, "I will give you permission to wear it."

Angela gave a quiet smile. It would not have made much difference whether or not the permission was given. She would still have worn the ring. Her promise to Paolo—her vow, of which the ring was a remembrance—was as fresh now in her heart as on that never-to-be-forgotten day, when overwhelming gratitude first called it forth. But she did not say so, and by-and-by, as the days passed and brought with each some new charm—some new grace to Angela, Sir Noel forgot his jealousy, and grew quite accustomed to seeing his own circle of diamonds gleaming above Count Paolo's ring.

But if those summer days brought happiness to Angela, they brought trouble as well. She loved Nancie very dearly, and now Nancie was grave and sorrowful, and quite changed from her old merry self. And, indeed, many beside Nancie were anxious enough, for the fever, at first confined to the lower parts of the town, had spread with alarming rapidity, and already there had been several cases and one death in the neighbourhood in which the Monteiths lived. Many of their friends—Carrie amongst the number—had taken flight to purer air, and Mrs. Monteith would willingly have followed their example, but both Nancie and her father refused to leave home. Bitterly enough, now that it was too late, Mr. Monteith regretted his past obstinacy; all that he could do to make amends he did, but that was little enough. The time had passed when prevention was possible. The enemy was in their midst, and only a fierce resistance was left to them.

Nancie would willingly have joined the sisters of mercy who went from house to house visiting and nursing the sick, but this Mr. Monteith absolutely forbade. She might give what help she liked, she might send any quantity of wine, and fruit, and nourishing food to the vicarage for distribution among the sick, but he would not

allow his pet daughter to run any unnecessary risks.

"There are plenty of people to be got to do the work, and far more efficiently," he said; "at all events I won't have you meddling."

And so Nancie reluctantly stayed at home, and fretted and fumed, and thought incessantly of Lansdell, and in that time of anxiety and suspense, found out what she had only fancied before—that, now that it was too late, she loved him with all her heart.

And day by day the heat increased, and the brilliant sunshine streamed upon the fever-stricken town, and the longed for, prayed for, rain seemed as far off as ever.

"I never thought it possible that I could get to hate the sunshine," Nancie said one evening, as she came across the lawn to the beech-tree, under which Angela was sitting at work. "I used to love it; to say that I could never tire of cloudless skies and sunshiny days; but I positively loathe it now. Oh dear, how thankful I should be for a good wet day!" She dropped wearily into a chair, and taking up a fan from the little table that stood by Angela's side, fanned herself. "How hot it is!"

"Yes; almost hotter outside than in the house, I think. I was debating whether to go in or not," Angela replied listlessly.

"Oh, don't go inside; the atmosphere is purer here. Mother is mad on the subject of disinfectants, you know, and the whole house reeks of carbolic acid and camphor, and basins of Condy's Fluid lurk in every unexpected corner, and act as snares for unwary feet. I nearly broke my neck over one just now, and after all I don't believe that it does any good," Nancie went on recklessly. "If we are to have the fever we shall have it, in spite of all our precautions and disinfectants. What are you looking at, Angela?" for Angela had dropped her work, and was lying back in her chair gazing up into the sky. "Anything unusual going on there?"

Angela laughed. She pointed to the west, where a dark cloud was slowly rising above the hills.

"See, I have been watching that cloud nearly half an hour," she said. "It was no bigger than a man's hand when I first noticed it, a tiny little dark island in an ocean of blue sky; but it is spreading gradually now. Oh, I do hope that your

wish will be gratified shortly, Nancie, and that the rain is near!"

"I hope so," Nancie, too, looked up eagerly at the clouds; "thunder rain, perhaps. The air feels very sultry. Well, it is needed, Heaven knows, and it will do no end of good. Why," she started and looked eagerly down the avenue, and her colour flushed and her eyes brightened. "I do believe there is Mr. Lansdell coming up the avenue. Yes"—as the distant figure came nearer and grew more distinct—"it is he!"

She sprang hastily from her chair and walked across the lawn and greeted him with an eager welcome and a bright smile and blush which were very charming in Lansdell's eyes. It was almost a month since he had seen her; a long, weary month, full of hard work both of body and mind, and no one but Lansdell himself knew how often he had longed for a sight of her bonny face. He looked very tired and worn, but his face brightened, and his eyes were full of quiet pleasure as he took the outstretched hands and held them tightly in his own.

"So you are not afraid of infection, Nancie?" he said with a smile.

"Afraid! What nonsense!"

Nancie gave a sweet, low laugh, and tossed back her head contemptuously.

"I don't think there is any danger; I changed my clothes, and disinfected myself thoroughly before I came," Lansdell went on. "No, I won't go into the house; I know Mrs. Monteith is nervous. I will stay here on the lawn if I may, and if you are sure you are not afraid of me."

"Afraid!"

The contempt which Nancie threw into her voice was beyond description, and partly no doubt in proof of her words, and partly because she was so unfeignedly glad to see him again, she put her hand through his arm, and led him across the lawn to Angela. They had not met since the engagement to Sir Noel had been publicly announced, although Lansdell had found time to write a little kind note of congratulation, and now she coloured brightly, and looked very happy and confused as he smiled, and greeted her as his new cousin, and asked for news of Sir Noel.

"I am sorry I did not see him before he left; he came twice to the vicarage, but I was not in, and I have not had time to write since. Will you tell him so, please, Angela, when you write?" he said. And

then he took the chair which Nancie drew forward, and leant back, and looked round the garden with a tranquil feeling of rest and happiness that had long been absent from his mind.

It was like a glimpse of Eden, he thought. The beautiful garden, the flowers, the sweet scents that filled the air, the pleased faces and sweet voices of the girls—all were inexpressibly soothing and delightful to the tired man, whose eyes had grown weary with watching by sick-beds, in whose ears the cries of despair and suffering still lingered.

The sight of Nancie's face alone was like a tonic—like a draught of water to a thirsty man—like anything wholesome, and sweet, and refreshing, he thought.

"For once we will treat you as a visitor," Nancie said brightly, "and wait upon you and fuss over you generally. You must have some refreshment. What shall it be—tea or coffee, or iced champagne? Which?"

"Coffee, I think."

"Very well, I will order it."

Nancie ran across the lawn to the house and gave her order to a servant whom she met in the hall. She fancied that the maid stared at her rather oddly, and, as soon as she was alone, she went to the mirror and looked at herself. Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes shone so brilliantly that Nancie herself was a little astonished at the change from the pale, sad face which had last met her eyes when, half an hour before, she had put on her hat before that same mirror.

"Why, I look quite pretty!" the girl said to herself with a low, sweet laugh. "I suppose it is because I am so happy—so glad to have him back again! Oh, what a little fool I was not to have found it out long ago!"

The hot blushes still dyed her face, as she returned to the lawn and took a seat by Angela's side; she was very happy, and so gay and excited that Lansdell looked at her with surprise and relief in his face.

"I met your father this afternoon, Nancie, and he told me I should find you looking far from well, but I think," and he laughed and touched her crimson cheek with his finger lightly, "his anxiety was misplaced. I never saw you looking better or brighter."

"You would have spoken very differently if you had seen her half an hour ago,"

Angela said with a quick glance and smile at Nancie's face. "She has looked like a ghost the last few days—so pale, and thin, and anxious."

"It has been an anxious time for us all," Lansdell said gravely. "I hope, however, that the worst is over now; there has been no fresh case since yesterday, and no death for the last two days. The Salvation Army held, or rather tried to hold, for we soon put a stop to that," Lansdell went on sternly, "a revival meeting in Green Street last night. One of their generals or captains, or some great gun, came over from Manchester to improve the occasion. He took up his position with his army round him, with all the glory of banners and brass band, and all the rest of it, in the centre of the street. Of course, a large crowd soon collected, and he commenced an eloquent discourse, in which he compared Barlaston to the Cities of the Plain, and declared that the fever was a judgment upon sin, instead of Nature's protest against dirt, and drunkenness, and uncleanly lives. He might have done who knows what mischief, for the people were growing excited, and one or two women already verging on the brink of hysterics, but fortunately Dr. Munroe happened to ride down the street, and he sent for the police and effected a speedy clearance. I should like to have a reckoning with that preacher fellow," Lansdell went on grimly. "There were two fresh cases of fever within the hour, both nervous, hysterical girls, who were literally frightened into it by his warnings and denunciations. That poor girl's death, for I feel sure that one at least will not recover, will lie at his door as surely as if he had run a knife through her heart. Munroe was—you know what an excitable little fellow he is—nearly crazy with fury and indignation. By the way, what a brave, plucky woman his sister is!" Lansdell went on in an admiring tone. "She has worked as hard as, or harder than, any of us during the last three weeks—always bright, always cheerful and hopeful. I really don't know what we should have done without her."

Nancie's face clouded.

"Others beside Janet Munroe would willingly have helped if they had been allowed," she said, in such a low, pained voice that Lansdell turned and looked at her.

"I know that," he said, and he smiled kindly; "I know you were with us in heart, at all events; that we had your

sympathy and prayers. And we needed both, I can tell you." He paused a moment, then, "But this is my holiday," he said, and he laughed and looked at Nancie. "We will not speak of the fever; we will forget all the misery and trouble, and the terrible scenes of the past three weeks, and enjoy our time while it lasts. That is the wisest philosophy—eh, Nancie?"

Nancie gave an answering smile.

"Much the wisest," she said gaily. "Here comes the coffee at last."

Lansdell had never enjoyed any food so much in his life as he enjoyed that cup of fragrant coffee, and the delicate roll-and-butter, and the freshly-gathered strawberries. He had not had a proper meal for several days, indeed he had not cared to eat, and his appetite returned at the sight of the pretty table, with its delicate china, and flowers, and fruit, and dainty food. Angela went into the house by-and-by, and left him alone with Nancie. They lingered under the beech-trees till the shadows fell and the night darkened, and the little clouds which Angela had watched so eagerly spread across the sky.

"Listen," Lansdell started and looked up at the sky. "I thought I heard thunder. Yes," as a flash of lightning illumined the blackness of the sky, and a low peal of thunder sounded in his ears, "it is."

"It looks like a storm," Nancie said gleefully; "I was wishing this afternoon that we might have a good wet day.

Look," and she pointed across the moors, "it is raining heavily there now."

The thunder pealed again, and a heavy drop of rain splashed in her face as she spoke. She sprang up from her chair, and looked gaily at Lansdell.

"You are weather-bound now for an hour or two. Come into the house at once, and I will send the servants to put the chairs under cover," she said, and followed by Lansdell, she ran across the lawn to the house.

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22	1 16 9	2 11 0	3 5 9	5 11 0	33 5 10	22
23	1 17 2	2 11 6	3 6 5	5 12 1	33 11 2	23
24	1 17 7	2 12 1	3 6 11	5 13 1	33 16 5	24
25	1 18 0	2 12 6	3 7 3	5 14 0	34 2 0	25
26	1 18 6	2 13 0	3 7 10	5 14 11	34 8 2	26
27	1 19 2	2 13 6	3 8 7	5 15 11	34 16 1	27
28	1 19 11	2 14 1	3 9 5	5 17 1	35 4 9	28
29	2 0 8	2 14 8	3 10 3	5 18 6	35 14 1	29
*30	2 1 6	2 15 4	3 11 2	6 0 1	36 4 0	*30
31	2 2 6	2 16 2	3 12 1	6 1 10	36 14 6	31
32	2 3 5	2 17 1	3 13 2	6 3 8	37 5 5	32
33	2 4 6	2 18 0	3 14 4	6 5 8	37 17 2	33
34	2 5 7	2 19 0	3 15 7	6 7 9	38 9 7	34
35	2 6 10	3 0 2	3 16 11	6 10 0	39 2 9	35
36	2 8 2	3 1 5	3 18 4	6 12 5	39 16 11	36
37	2 9 8	3 2 9	3 19 11	6 15 0	40 12 4	37
38	2 11 3	3 4 3	4 1 7	6 17 9	41 8 7	38
39	2 12 11	3 5 9	4 3 4	7 0 7	42 5 4	39
†40	2 14 9	3 7 5	4 5 2	7 3 7	43 2 10	†40
41	2 16 8	3 9 2	4 7 2	7 6 8	44 0 11	41
42	2 18 8	3 11 1	4 9 3	7 9 11	44 19 9	42
43	3 0 11	3 13 1	4 11 5	7 13 3	45 19 3	43
44	3 3 3	3 15 3	4 13 10	7 16 9	46 19 7	44
45	3 5 9	3 17 6	4 16 4	8 0 7	48 0 8	45
46	3 8 5	4 0 0	4 19 1	8 4 6	49 2 8	46
47	3 11 5	4 2 8	5 2 1	8 8 8	50 5 8	47
48	3 14 8	4 5 8	5 5 4	8 13 2	51 9 7	48
49	3 18 1	4 8 9	5 8 9	8 17 11	52 14 1	49
50	4 1 7	4 12 1	5 12 4	9 2 10	53 19 3	50
51	4 5 6	4 15 5	5 16 1	9 7 11	55 4 5	51
52	4 9 5	4 18 10	5 19 11	9 13 1	56 9 0	52
53	4 13 5	5 2 5	6 3 11	9 18 3	57 12 11	53
54	4 17 8	5 6 3	6 8 0	10 3 5	58 17 2	54
55	5 1 11	5 10 2	6 12 1	10 8 6	60 0 8	55
56	5 6 4	.....	6 14 9	10 13 7	61 3 8	56
57	5 10 11	.....	6 18 8	10 18 8	62 6 5	57
58	5 15 9	7 2 9	11 3 10	63 9 4	58
59	6 1 0	7 7 3	11 9 0	64 12 11	59
60	6 6 7	7 12 0	11 14 3	65 16 9	60

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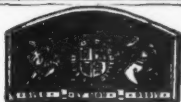
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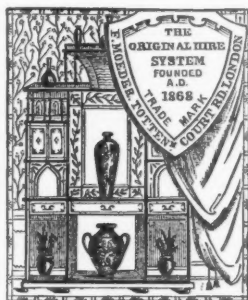
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